



# Chambers's Journal

## SIXTH SERIES.



### BOGUS ANTIQUES.

**T**HE passion for collecting antiques is now a widespread one. The number of old curiosity shops has, however, grown out of all proportion to the increase in the ranks of the buyers.

That so many of these shops should survive is astonishing, for the articles they sell are, at the best, desirable superfluities. The contents of the average old curiosity shop are, however, by no means desirable. The fact is, they do not depend for custom upon the true *virtuoso*. The man who studies his hobby is a scant source of profit. In the first place, he knows the real from the false; in the second, he will not pay exorbitant prices. It is the people who buy to be in the fashion who are the best customers. They fill their drawing-rooms with incongruous articles, which have often neither beauty, quaintness, nor historic associations to recommend them. Their antiquity even—to many a sufficient attraction—is often more than doubtful. Many were unquestionably made but the day before yesterday.

These people may be divided into two classes. First, there is the person who will not buy anything which is not highly priced. It is the only test he knows; he would disdain a masterpiece if it were to be had for a few shillings. Secondly, and inversely, there is the man who will not buy unless the article is ridiculously cheap. This man, the bargain-hunter, has the little knowledge which is so dangerous a thing anywhere, but especially in the old curiosity shop. He makes the fatal blunder of thinking that the dealer does not know his business. He believes that rarities are frequently to be bought for an old song. He mistakes the exception for the rule. Though he knows the value of the genuine article, he has not sufficient experience to distinguish it from the imitation. The less scrupulous type of dealer, a keen judge of human nature, recognises this class of dupe at sight. He prepares to play his part; his ignorance and obtuseness are admirably feigned. He will commit himself to nothing; he knows nothing. He has been told, he says, that the

article is very old or very rare. It was, he believes, in the possession of a certain family for a great many years, and they valued it highly. The bargain-hunter thereupon sees only a huckster, without knowledge or taste. He makes the purchase, and goes out of the shop with a look of ill-concealed satisfaction. He has got the best of it. The dealer is well satisfied too; he has sold a bogus antique for, perhaps, ten times what it cost him.

There are plenty of old curiosity shops where it would be difficult to find an article which is what it pretends to be. The persistent credulity of their customers must be a sore temptation even to honest dealers. Of old curiosity shops in general it may be fairly estimated that forty-five per cent. of the objects offered are spurious; expressly manufactured for sale, or 'faked' in some way. The ingenuity of the forger is unlimited. Furniture, prints, china, pictures, plate, armour, ivory, bronze, and tapestry—all are successfully imitated. 'Antique' armour and metal-work of all kinds are made in Birmingham. Spurious antique china comes from France, Holland, and Germany. The spurious print is perhaps the commonest trap of all. 'The craze of the coloured print' is just now with us, and the demand for examples of the celebrated engravers of the eighteenth century exceeds the supply a hundredfold. They are exceedingly scarce; consequently the market is flooded with reprints and reproductions. Several firms are engaged in producing them, and they cost the dealer in 'objects of art' from seven and sixpence to a pound apiece. Usually the paper is manipulated to give it the appearance of age, or the print is put into an old frame. It is certain that countless numbers of them are sold as originals. A reprint has this excuse, that, though subsequently 'touched' by a more modern hand, it is an impression taken from the original copper plate; but it cannot, of course, be compared with original prints from the graver of Bartolozzi, Ward, Schiavonetti, Valentine Green, Cipriani, or John Raphael Smith. A reprint, however, still contains some of the original lines. A reproduction is

merely a copy, every line of which, aided by photography, has been traced by a modern hand.

Most of the imitations of the antique are clumsy enough; though this is not always the case. The experts of our national museums have more than once been successfully imposed upon. The British Museum bought a Palissy plate for fifty pounds. Whilst an attendant was handling it one of the seals fixed to the back of the plate—attesting its genuineness—became detached, disclosing the mark of a modern French potter. Two terra-cotta figures of Isis and Osiris, bought for the same institution, and which cost a thousand pounds, have been discovered to be composed of modern clay. Antique china, a leading attraction of the old curiosity shops, is a fruitful source of fraud. From the extreme fragility of the material, even where intricacy of design or ornamentation was not superadded, the majority of the works of the early potters were doomed to speedy destruction. The forger is, as a rule, fortunately unable to reproduce the marvels of glaze, colouring, and decoration, of which in many cases the secret has been lost. Yet the windows of these shops are filled with spurious examples of Chelsea, Lowestoft, Dresden, Wedgwood, Worcester, Italian, or Limoges. Imitations even of the coarse Staffordshire figures of the Georgian and early Victorian period find a ready sale. Quite two-thirds of them are spurious, and are turned out by the gross from certain modern potteries. They are allowed to remain on the shelves of the curiosity shop until they have accumulated sufficient dirt and dust, the bottoms are rubbed upon some hard substance so that they will show signs of wear, and they are then ready for the first gullible purchaser.

There is scarcely any object of art which is not imitated to a greater or less degree. The speciality of one forger is old leather jacks, at ten shillings each; of another, horn-books at five shillings apiece. The price charged varies; but it may be set down at about a thousand per cent. profit on the cost. The writer not long since inspected a specimen of a 'mummy servant'—an effigy, in a plastic material, such as the Egyptians buried with their dead. A close examination proved it to be made of putty! It was the work of a very clever forger.

The trade in spurious works of art is by no means confined to this country. A writer in the *New York Herald* of January 22 and May 12, 1899, tells us that Rome, once the recognised centre of art, is now a huge emporium for forgeries. These are not only manufactured on the spot, but come from Paris, Munich, Egypt, Greece, Asia Minor, and this country. 'Buy, for instance, if you are not an expert, a specimen of old Dresden or Capo di Monte porcelain. You will most probably be the possessor of a statuette or group manufactured in Paris or Munich, instead of an authentic piece from the palace of a Roman prince. . . .

'The statuettes and Egyptian scarabees, cameos and antique gems, Greek and foreign jewels of gold, the bronze or silver coins and moneys, the antique terra-cottas, weapons, Florentine Renaissance marbles, Tanagra figures and the fine figures from Asia Minor—all these interesting antiquities are the work of skilful contemporary workmen, very often excellent artists, capable of creating works of their own if they only had a little encouragement from those whom they cheat for the benefit of unscrupulous dealers. . . .

'To-day artistic Rome is invaded by wealthy and powerful syndicates of dealers in statues and pictures, in league with guides and couriers, and with copyists often fraudulent. The audacity of some of these cheats, who keep shops largely advertised, has known no limits. When dealing with the foreigner, who is often too confiding, they sell false antiquities as guaranteed originals, which are mere copies from the masters. This trickery is practised at the expense of artists of talent. A foreign sculptor recently caused to be seized a dozen reproductions of models stolen from his studios during his absence from Rome; and an artist of great talent, recently returned from the United States, had seen arrive at one of the largest museums packing-cases containing antiquities purchased in Rome at enormous prices. These were such gross imitations that the curator of the museum refused them admittance into the department reserved for antiquities.'

Referring to this same subject of forging antiquities in Italy, some interesting details are given in the twelfth chapter of a small work recently translated into English (*Memories of an Old Collector*: Longmans, Green, & Co., 1898). The author, Count Michael Tyskiewicz, a noted collector and judge of antiques, tells us that from earliest times men have been occupied in forging antiquities, and that no metal lends itself so easily to forgery as gold. Etruscan jewellery has been largely manufactured in Italy; but in Syria the forgery of gold works of art is most extensive. Forgers have also attempted to manufacture ancient silver plate, but their efforts have been very unsuccessful. The Count tells an amusing story of 'a great silver cup in Rome that purported to have come from some secret excavations in Sicily. It was ornamented with a circular bas-relief representing—Could any one believe such a thing?—the frieze of the Parthenon! In the height of his innocence the forger had given the frieze in its present ruined condition. The cup obtained an immediate success—of shouts of laughter!'

Moved by the numerous complaints and claims of visitors, and the absence of special laws against forgery in Italy, an association has been formed to put an end, if possible, to this state of things. It consists of artists, dilettanti, collectors, and conscientious dealers who have long protested in vain. In the interests of the travelling public we wish their praiseworthy efforts every success.

## THE LOST CAUSE.

## CHAPTER II.—THE OPEN DOOR.



WHEN my senses woke, slowly and not too clearly, 'twas to the consciousness of a very different scene.

At first, indeed, my only feeling was one of overpowering weakness.

My wits were still befogged, and I had no curiosity. Gradually a pleasing sense of ease and warmth crept over me, and caused a vague wonder; then, all at once, the fog lifted to the memory of my misadventure; and therewith came the knowledge that I was not lying on the frozen, moonlit road, but on a couch in a well-warmed room—and also the knowledge, as I turned upon my side, of a sharp pang in my wounded shoulder. Even in my new position, however, I could see nothing save a small square table upon which a single candle burned. It held likewise a bottle and glass and some strips of linen, and the firelight was reflected from its polished sides.

Presently I strove to raise myself upon the couch; but so great was the agony that, against my will, a cry escaped me. It brought no response. Plainly, I was alone in the room.

For a time I lay still, contenting myself with vague speculations. Where I was, what had happened subsequent to my fall—these were points to which I could find no answer, and I might have troubled my mazed brain with them longer (and to the same purpose) but for a noise that suddenly smote my ears. Beyond doubt 'twas the sound of men's voices, mingled with laughter and the clink of glasses; and although it lasted scarce a moment—for such a space, say, as might suffice for the opening and shutting of a door—it served to rouse me to action. I felt that the question of my whereabouts must be resolved incontinently.

So, clenching my teeth, I managed to struggle to a sitting posture. The effort left me dizzy and sick with pain; but after a minute I was able to look about me. I learned little; the couch and table, set in front of a glowing fire, were cut off from the rest of the room by a screen. For myself, I was swathed in blankets; and, throwing them off, I found that I had been stripped of coat and waistcoat, and that their place was taken by a light wrap tied round my shoulders.

My next step was to pass the screen, and in my state of weakness this was a task of infinite difficulty. At length, somehow, I did so. Beyond, the room was almost in darkness. But the door was slightly ajar, and here a narrow shaft of light struck against the wainscoting of the wall. This light seemed to draw me; I had eyes for it alone, yet hesitated to advance; and, while I halted irresolute, another burst of sound came to

me from without. Before it had died away my determination was fixed.

Slowly and most carefully, resting often to steady my swimming head, I felt my way along the wall to the door. Reaching it, I stopped to listen. Now I heard only a low hum as of a single voice—that and nought else. So I made haste to pull the door open, and glanced out into a passage dimly lit by a lamp upon a bracket. There were several other doors, all closed, and opposite mine a staircase descended. Still there was no sound save the low hum, and presently it too had ceased. I waited while one might count a score; then, moved by the dead silence, I stepped across the passage to the stairhead. And as I leaned against the banister and looked over, this is what I saw:

On the other side of the little hall below, a wide-open door showed me a well-furnished, well-lit room and a table covered with bottles and glasses; a group of men standing together, as if they had just risen from their wine; and, a pace or two within the door, another man who stood apart, with his back towards me and his face to the others. These were four or five in number; and, if the fashion of their dress and their air did not belie them, they were people of some quality. For the moment, their whole attention seemed to be claimed by their companion at the door. He, in turn, was a man of good height and figure, albeit with a slight stoop of the shoulders that hinted of middle age; he was heavily cloaked, and was the only person in the room wearing a hat.

So much had I grasped, when the cloaked gentleman spoke. The tones were low, but so clear that I missed not a word.

'I thank you again, gentlemen,' said he. 'But I assure you it is needless. My good host is escort enough.'

Apparently this was taken as the final answer to some request; for his companions bowed deep, as to the command of a superior. Then ensued a strange scene. One by one the men came forward, each with an air of profound deference that (surprising as it was) could not be mistaken. In the ear of each a few words were whispered; each bent low, and *kissed the hand of the cloaked one!* I could perceive their faces as they fell back in succession—there was not one that was without some trace of emotion. But here followed the most significant incident of all. Suddenly five swords were drawn as one and brandished, while their wearers (I was assured in my own mind) would instantly have given voice to some cry had not a raised arm restrained them.

'Not here, gentlemen!' I heard. 'You know

my wishes. So—not now, if you would please me!’

My brain was whirling once more. I could scarce believe the testimony of my eyes, nor (above all) could I imagine what all this portended—the marked and unwonted respect of these gentlemen, the dignity with which it was received, the solemnity of the whole ceremony. Meaning it must have—such regard was not paid without cause. I had an overmastering anxiety to behold the face of the mysterious personage who had thus called it forth.

The swords had been sheathed at his word, and now he spoke again.

‘It must be farewell, my friends—for the present,’ said he. ‘Or, let us rather hope, *au revoir*. But first, Sir Charles’—

He turned half-round, and in a second my desire would have been fulfilled. But Fortune willed it otherwise. In that second a touch fell on my unwounded shoulder, and I wheeled with a start—to see at my elbow a maiden of perhaps twenty years, and to hear her voice. I had been too intent on that which was passing beneath to notice her approach.

‘Are you mad, sir—after such an accident?’ she said, almost in a whisper. ‘Come, you must return to your room at once!’

The tones were those of gentle breeding yet of sufficient authority. But I did not move—I could not. I was held perforce by her rare and winning beauty. Here I may not describe her, and at the time, in truth, I saw little more than the womanly pity in her wistful, eloquent eyes. Luckily I realised not the sorry figure that I myself must have cut.

‘Surely they did not leave you alone?’ she asked after a moment. ‘But you must not stay here. Come!’

She laid her hand on my arm, and somehow, curiously, I had no resistance to offer, but permitted her to lead me back to my room; and just as we entered it this cry rose from the hall:

‘Kitty! Kitty!’

Saying not a word, she directed my steps towards the couch, and had done so as far as the screen, when, without warning, the effect of my late efforts overtook me. I felt my strength going, and clutched wildly at the screen; and doubtless it would have fallen with me had I not been caught by these ready hands and deftly guided to my old place. The last that I recollected was a repetition of the call:

‘Kitty! Kitty!’

I was in bed in another room when I came to myself again. I was conscious of a faint perfume as of lavender; my head seemed clearer; and, strangely enough, my earliest thoughts were of my adventure on the Bath road and the polite highwayman. Then I was aware of voices.

‘Is he better?’ asked one.

‘Oh, he’ll do famously now,’ said another. ‘But he is lucky—the least thing lower and ’twould have been through his lung. As it is, he has lost a deal of blood.’

‘Poor young gentleman!’

‘He is young enough to be able to spare it. A day or two—and your nursing—will bring him round.’

At first it did not strike me that it was of myself they were speaking, until an arm was slipped beneath me, and I was propped against the pillows.

‘Now, Mrs Herbert, the glass—quick, if you please.’

Opening my eyes, I saw that two persons were by the bedside, a man and a woman—she a gentle-faced, elderly lady in a marvellous cap, and he a clean-shaven man of middle age, quietly garbed in black, yet with an air that (even at a first glance) was unmistakably military. He it was who had spoken, and was now regarding me with kindly, alert eyes.

‘Where am I?’ I asked.

‘So you’ve come to!’ said he cheerfully. ‘Gently, sir! You must not move; your wound has just been dressed. Rest assured you are in good hands.’

‘You are the surgeon?’

‘I am yours, for want of a better. . . . Now, drink this and go to sleep. You will be more fit for talk in the morning.’

‘But—the highwayman?’ I persisted, still groping in the dark.

‘The highwayman? Oh, I’ll warrant he’s in safety long ago. But come, sir!’ he cried, holding the glass to my lips, ‘you must drink off your medicine.’

That, at least, was not difficult of accomplishment; for the medicine (so-called) had a delectable smack of old sherry; and presently it had its proper effect, and with a sense of the utmost rest and comfort I slipped into the oblivion of sleep.

But this was only at first. After a time my slumber was broken by a disturbing medley of dream-images—or so they seemed to me. My host, and the highwayman, and the party which I had overseen, all changed places in these feverish visions with an amazing inconsequence. Now it was my host who knelt beside me on the broad stretch of the Bath road, and I had no fear. Again I was in bed, and ’twas the masked pad who bent over me, and with mocking laughter held his point to my throat; and thereat I could have called out in terror, and mayhap did so. Other scenes there were; but ever and always, at the moment of danger, the face of a girl interposed, and the hateful phantoms were routed. Need I say whose face it was? Afterwards I could recollect every feature and expression; and all night it rose between me and my terrors like the face of an angel, and in the morning the im-

pression was still so vivid that, waking, I half-hoped to see it before me. But the only face that I saw was the placid, motherly countenance of the old gentlewoman, Mrs Herbert.

She was standing by the little window, looking out. A frosty ray of sunshine straggled through, but was no rival to the warmer light that gleamed from the fire and was reflected from the dark oak wainscoting of the chamber.

For a little I left her undisturbed, and lay quiet, idly recalling the events that (as far as they were known to me) had followed my encounter. That, to be sure, was vivid enough in my memory; but so shadowy and confused were my later recollections that, just then, I could scarce decide how much was real and how much was the fruit of uneasy dreams. But these considerations were soon driven forth by one more clamant. I remembered my mission, and its urgent importance; and while the doubt as to what had befallen Joseph—whether he had escaped scot-free and fulfilled his errand, or whether his pursuer had overhauled him—remained unsettled, I had a duty that permitted no rest. So:

'Good-morning, madam,' said I.

Mrs Herbert, returning the greeting, approached the bed. 'You have had a restless night, but I hope you feel better,' said she.

'So much so,' I replied, 'that I am thinking of rising.'

'As to that, sir, you must see Mr Morell. Just now I will get some breakfast for you.'

'First you will tell me where I am?' I pleaded as she turned to go.

'This is the Dower-house of Langbridge Hall.'

'And how did I come here?'

'Mr Morell found you lying wounded on the road. He was riding home from Devizes with a friend—Mr Kennett of Langbridge—when they saw you, and brought you here as being the nearest house. Now, if you will allow me, sir,' she said, 'I will tell him you are wakened.'

She went off in some haste, but came back presently with a tray containing such dainty viands as might tempt an invalid; to which I was able, to my gratification, to do full justice. I was barely done with the repast, and feeling all the stronger for it, when my host appeared. I would have thanked him for his great courtesy, but he refused to listen to a single word until my wound was examined. In the interval I had good opportunity to study him, and, as the result, was confirmed in my over-night estimate; there could be no doubt of his quality, nor that he had seen service. In other respects I had a curious, vague idea that he was (or should have been) not altogether unknown to me, yet for my life I could not trace the notion.

At length his task was finished.

'There! that's right,' he cried. 'It is healing beautifully, sir; you will be out of bed to-morrow,

and in three days will be ready for the saddle again.'

'Three days!' I repeated, aghast. 'But I must be riding to-day!'

'Neither to-day nor to-morrow,' said he. 'Why, 'tis utterly impossible! There was snow in the night, and it threatens more; and, to be frank, 'twould mean your death.'

'Still, I must go. There is my duty'—

'And there is mine as your surgeon, which is to keep you here. Be sensible, man!' Smiling: 'At the worst, you don't propose to ride without your small-clothes?'

In truth, as a glance assured me, my garments had been removed; and, notwithstanding my impatience and chagrin, I could not resist an answering smile at his little conceit. Yet he seemed to read my thoughts.

'Come, let us make a bargain,' he continued.

'The clothes will be restored in due time—say at noon—if you will promise me to rest content so long. After that you must decide for yourself. Honestly, you will be none the worse for a few more hours' sleep.'

'But I could not sleep when'—

'Oh! I have a magical elixir that will ensure it. Now, what is it to be?'

He had the whip-hand, and I must needs accept; and, besides, his manner was so brisk and friendly, and my debt to him so great, that 'twould have been churlish to stand out. So I gave in—handsomely, I hope—and even tried to find words for the proper acknowledgment of his rescue of me on the Bath road. But there he cut me short.

''Twas only what any gentleman would have done,' said he. 'Think no more of it, I pray you. But I should like to hear, if it would not weary you, how you came to be in such a pass!'

I told the story as briefly as might be, hiding nothing save the nature of my mission. He listened without interruption.

'Just as I thought,' he cried. 'The pad was Craddock, beyond a doubt—Squire Craddock they call him hereabouts, because of his grand manner and some tradition of gentle birth. You would know him again?'

'I am sure of it,' I returned. 'He was masked, of course; but I could not mistake his figure and voice.'

'Ah!—After all,' he went on, 'he is a bold rogue, and I have a fancy to meet him. What do you say, sir, to a hunt after him together when your shoulder is better? A turn with such a swordsman would be a pleasure!... And your servant escaped?'

'That is what I must learn as soon as possible. Much depends upon it.'

'So? Well, for our part, we must have disturbed him at work—my neighbour, Mr Kennett, was with me. Indeed, we heard his horse's hoofs

in the distance as we came up. Doubtless 'twas the sound of ours that alarmed him. But I am sorry to tell you he had found time to clear you out most effectually. I took the liberty of searching your clothes later on, and your pocket-book, watch and seals, all your valuables, were gone—everything except your sword, which my friend picked up on the road.'

Even that was something, for the rapier had belonged to my grandfather; and for the rest, having expected it, I cared little if only the papers in Joseph's charge were safe. In any case, my trinkets were of small account in comparison with my life. 'And that, sir, I owe to you,' I said. 'But for your charity, the frost must soon have completed Craddock's work.'

He shook his head. 'Now, I am not so certain,' said he. 'The man has some good; your wound was roughly bandaged, and why should he have done that had he intended you to freeze? You were unconscious—probably he would have made means to get you to an inn or somewhere. Not that the half-mile hence that we brought you across my saddle was too little! And so you are here,' he said; 'and here, at your pleasure, is another draught of your medicine. Drink it—and sleep!'

I did both, the latter almost instantly; for truly the stuff, whatever its ingredients were, seemed to have a wonderful potency. It was fully an hour past midday when I was awakened by Mrs Herbert. Dinner was by my bedside, and there also my clothes were laid out, with clean linen—my coat brushed and neatly darned, and everything in readiness. I felt a new man, and my appetite did not belie the feeling, much to the pleasure of the good lady who attended to me.

'Mr Morell will be up presently,' she said as she retired.

But I was too impatient to wait. I rose at once, made shift to begin my toilet without assistance, and, in spite of sundry difficulties, had nearly completed it, when my host entered.

Rallying me on my haste, he helped me to add the last touches. Then he opened the door for me.

'Now, if you are ready'—

'Thank you. But I'm afraid I must walk slowly. My legs are still somewhat unsteady, I find.'

'Quite naturally. If you will take my arm—so!'

We passed out as he spoke, and then I pulled up with a start; for we stood upon the landing from which, on the previous evening, I had witnessed such a remarkable scene. The whole incident recurred to my mind in a flash, and I knew that it had been no dream.

'Don't fear to lean upon me,' continued my host, misapprehending my action. 'The weakness will soon go.'

So we descended the stair, thoughtfully on my part, on his with a flow of advice and encouragement. At the bottom, in the hall, he stopped and said:

'By the way—you will pardon my remissness, sir—but I do not think I have your name.'

'The blame is mine,' I replied, and gave it.

He turned to me, as if in surprise. 'Not of the Holroyds of the West Riding, surely?'

'My father is Bevil Holroyd of Dunsyre.'

'What!' he cried. 'Bevil Holroyd, my old schoolfellow and companion! It can't be!' Then he broke into merry laughter. 'Why, this is famous! But come, Mr Holroyd.'

He threw open a door, and from the fireside of a small, cosy room two ladies rose to greet us. One was Mrs Herbert; the other was she whom I had met on the stair-head—and the maiden of my visions. There was a pleasing tinge of red in her cheeks as she came forward.

'My dear, I have a surprise for you,' cried my host. To me: 'Sir, this is my daughter Kitty.—Kitty, let me present to you—your cousin, George Holroyd!'

And again he laughed heartily.

## SECONDARY EDUCATION IN ENGLAND.



WHEN you have been taking things fairly comfortably, confident that all was going on very well, or at least that there was nothing to worry about, and at last discover that you have been living in a sort of fool's paradise, you feel somewhat mortified and crestfallen. In any case, the discovery will have a wholesome effect; and if matters have not gone too far the bitterness soon yields to a feeling of thankfulness at having one's eyes opened in time. Many persons who have John Bull's welfare at heart have for some time past been trying to make him realise that an inconspicuous

but essential part of his domestic arrangements is seriously out of order, and is daily getting worse. At length they have gained the good man's ear. They are assuring him that, while he has made some provision for the education of his poorer dependents, the others have been left to shift for themselves; in this scramble a few come off well, but many fare badly; the process is costly and wasteful, and so faulty and ineffective that, in this age of increasing competition, even an old commercial house such as his *must* meet with disaster unless this serious defect is made thoroughly good without further delay.

John admits that his trade is not growing,

while that of some of his rivals with fewer natural advantages is increasing by leaps and bounds. He admits there may be something amiss—something possibly within his control. But for a long time he has been doing very well on the whole—much better, indeed, than most other firms. Still, these foreigners are undoubtedly taking away some of his trade. He resolves at last, therefore, to make full inquiries of his agents abroad as to the alleged facts and their causes, and is told practically the same tale by all of them—namely, that the allegations as to trade are true, and that the causes are that at home the old firm is too slow in taking up new ideas and in improving old methods, and does not sufficiently study its customers' varied requirements abroad; in fact, that, through its insularity and its conservatism, the old firm is being beaten by houses that put more brains into their work. The old man can hold out no longer. He consults his friends, therefore, as to the education of his agents, managers, clerks, and other brain-workers whose mental alertness and attainments are impugned, and they report to him as follows.

#### THE VARIOUS KINDS OF SCHOOLS.

A secondary school is one in which many, usually most, of the pupils are receiving an education higher than that given in the ordinary primary or public elementary school. It is in schools of this class that the great majority of our manufacturers, merchants, managers, commercial travellers, clerks, engineers, electricians, chemists, farmers, and professional classes are educated. While uniformity is the characteristic of the primary schools, variety does and must prevail among schools producing such diverse products as the above. A future engineer requires an education which might not suit a future solicitor or a city clerk. It will be best to glance briefly at the leading types of secondary schools. First, we may note a few wealthy old schools like Eton and Harrow—'non-local' we might term them—whose connection with commerce is so indirect that we can disregard them here. It is the second class, coming below these, that claims our attention. They comprise a great variety—the old grammar-schools, large and small; the modern 'Foundation' school of our towns, the fruit of ancient endowments for charitable or for educational purposes, rendered available for secondary education by the State's provision of free primary education; the 'company's' school, provided by the wealthy city company, or by a church-schools company, or by a girls' public school company; the proprietary school, the property of a body of shareholders who hold the right of nominating boys for admission to the school; and the numerous private schools. Examples of most of these will readily occur to readers of this *Journal*. It would be hard to say in what these schools are alike, except that the standard of attainment reached is usually in advance of that of the primary school. They vary

in their form of control, in their financial arrangements, in the subject or subjects emphasised, in the age and social status of their pupils, in their aim, and so on. Their peculiar feature is their individuality: each school stands by itself, is a law to itself, is judged by itself. With few exceptions it is not adjusted with reference either to the primary schools below it, other secondary schools about it, or to the local industries. Indeed, so many different interests and callings are represented in a secondary school, especially if it is the only one in the district, that, except for the highest classes of a good school, a *general* education seems the only course available, as it is undoubtedly the best.

#### THE SUPPLY OF SCHOOLS.

The number of schools is doubtless equal to the demand for places. This is easily explained. The country districts and the older towns are fairly well supplied with the old endowed grammar-schools; new districts possess many of the other public schools mentioned above. But where these are wanting, and even close beside them, private schools are found. Indeed, the latter schools have done good service to the community: they often prove more congenial to a delicate boy than the public school, and they adapt themselves to the needs of their *clientèle* in a way the endowed school refuses to do. They serve as the training-ground for very many of the teachers in the public schools, and they have supplied many districts with the only secondary schools they possess. There is always a considerable number of assistant-masters and mistresses, or of other less qualified but enterprising persons, keeping a sharp lookout for any opening for a private school; partly from a desire to become one's own master, partly from the insecurity of an assistant's tenure in most public schools. And in a good district, where fairly high fees can be obtained and there is no endowed school to compete with, a private school may do tolerably well—both for pupils and teachers. But when a district deteriorates, or an endowed school is established at low fees, or a higher grade school at moderate fees, the private school is doomed to painful extinction. This process is now taking place in many districts. The impecunious public school is in much the same position. Its endowment, perhaps, has declined through agricultural depression; the railways now take away to distant schools the pupils of its richer patrons; the free Board school satisfies the poorer pupils; and possibly the more enterprising parents find in a neighbouring town a newer school, equipped with all modern improvements, well staffed, well graded, complete in every respect. Hence the master of the poor grammar-school finds his position a very anxious, possibly a ruinous one, for frequently enough he 'farms' his school, taking all and paying all. But the latter school usually has buildings of its own

and some endowment, however small; and being a 'public' school—that is, under the control of a body of governors—it has this advantage over the private school, that it is eligible to earn and receive grants of money from the Science and Art Department and the County Council. A private institution, however good, is refused all recognition by the State. Now, if it be borne in mind that hundreds of our secondary schools are small country grammar-schools, having small endowments, and unable to charge more than a moderate fee, depending largely on the supply of boarders, it will be seen how great is the temptation to go in for the business of earning 'grants,' by giving instruction in science subjects, to the neglect of the other work.

Fostered by these grants from the Science and Art Department, the teaching of science has developed enormously in the poorer schools during the last ten or fifteen years. The literary side of education, to which more value used to be attached, has suffered; the schools, as a means of training character, have suffered; nor does it appear that there is an equivalent gain. The change was made, not because it suited a particular district, but simply and solely because it 'paid'! Presumably to meet the allegation that non-science work was being crushed out, the Science and Art Department now recognises and inspects a school as a whole, taking account of all its work, provided it devotes a certain number of hours per week to certain subjects—science, mathematics, drawing, and manual work. The grant is assessed on the general character of the work. This is the 'School of Science.' Probably the arrangement was made for the special benefit of poor schools in manufacturing districts; but, of course, the poverty of other schools where a scientific course was not needed drove them to accept the scheme. The small, poor schools in country districts, however, cannot avail themselves of this help: they must look to the County Council, which, under the Technical Instruction and other Acts, may assist schools out of its share of the 'whisky money,' and may levy a special rate for this purpose, though it seldom or never does so. This assistance usually takes the form of an annual grant for or towards the payment of a master for science or drawing, or a grant for buildings or fittings. As a condition it claims a voice in the control of the school. Many small schools receive a little help in this way, but not enough to enable them to pay well-qualified teachers. Large schools get substantial help from the same source, at the same time that they may be earning other grants as mentioned above. Thus, while a large school, by sacrificing its curriculum to science, may benefit to the extent of seven or eight hundred pounds a year, the small, poor school is left to make the most of its 'salubrious situation' and the 'unlimited diet' provided for boarders. Well-endowed schools are free from this ignoble and

degrading struggle for the means to carry on their work; they are free to adopt the most suitable curriculum without restriction; they can afford to pay highly-qualified teachers, to give them small classes, and to provide the necessary appliances; they can offer them fair salaries and a pension: in short, the well-endowed schools, and they alone, can carry on the business of secondary education in an efficient manner.

Mr Bryce, M.P., lately ventilated his opinion as to the prevailing tendency to substitute physical science for literary and humane subjects, which he thought had gone too far, and was becoming a serious danger to the future education of the people; 'for,' said he, 'the substitution of a scientific education for the teaching which had led to the highest thoughts and ideas of mankind would produce a hard, dry, gritty, unfertile type of mind, as compared with the results which literary studies ought to produce.'

#### TEACHERS' PENSIONS AND SALARIES.

I have gone into some detail on this part of the subject because it lies at the root of all reform and reorganisation. Secondary education cannot be done on the cheap if it is to be well done. Given land, premises, and fittings all in working order, the cost per pupil cannot be reduced below eleven or twelve pounds a year—except at the sacrifice of efficiency. For there is one costly peculiarity to bear in mind here—namely, that teaching, when a man puts his heart into it (and without that it is a sorry thing), is exceptionally wearing work. In spite of apparently short hours—*school* hours are not long—and quite exceptional holidays, the dominie, in a town school at least, has lost much of his buoyancy and vivacity and energy at fifty-five. He is getting out of touch with the active young spirits he ought to guide and lead. 'Crabbed age and youth cannot live together.' The schoolmaster's work never becomes one of routine, never tends in the slightest degree to do so, and never can so tend, simply because the material with which he has to deal is composed of individual units of which no two are alike; and no sooner has he managed to acquire some knowledge of the dispositions and abilities of one set of pupils than he loses them and has to begin again with another. No matter how long a teacher remains at his work, it never becomes appreciably easier. In a pension scheme for assistant masters recently established by the Incorporated Association of Head-Masters in England, fifty-five is the pension age adopted. It would thus appear that in the case of teachers exceptionally liberal pension arrangements must be made unless we are willing to see them retained in schools after they have ceased to be efficient; and that this applies specially to the case of town schools, where the classes are large. It should be borne in mind in this connection that it is the hardest workers who break down soonest. The Superannuation Act for primary teachers

passed last session fixes the pension age at sixty-five; but possibly this is a temporary arrangement.

Now as to the salaries paid in secondary schools. Those of the head-teachers in large town schools are good; in the country they depend largely on what is not school work at all—namely, the management of a boarding-house. So important is this element that I have known of a hotel-keeper who was at the same time proprietor of two (private) boarding-schools, the minor department of the business, of course, being left to a paid head-master! As to assistant-teachers, they are, except in the case of comparatively few schools, paid very badly, whether compared with head-teachers or with educated people in other walks of life. It might be more correct to say the salaries are very low, the well-qualified teachers being greatly underpaid; the many of mediocre qualifications probably earning as much here as they would anywhere else. I could furnish some interesting but painful figures on this vital point—for it undoubtedly is the vital point in the whole question of secondary education. We may make grants and build palatial premises; we may co-ordinate our schools and prevent overlapping and undue competition; we may draw up syllabuses and compile curricula for various types of schools. But it will all be as sounding brass and tinkling cymbals unless we realise that these are but the husk and not the kernel, the house and not the home, the body only, not the spirit. *A school is made by its teachers, and by them only.* Good books and apparatus being taken for granted, nothing else is really necessary besides scholars and teachers. In our desire to show what we are doing, or to satisfy the unthinking, or to dignify the work, we erect a palace and call it a school. Formerly it was called a school-house. What a world of mischief may be wrought by a word! Is it not the popular notion that when you have got your handsome building the thing in the main is done? As for the teaching, why, anybody can do that. For the wages of a mechanic you can get a Master of Arts; a German or a French master for those of a house-painter! The thing is simple enough, it would seem. But how can we secure an efficient teacher? As the best schools do now—that is, by offering a fairly liberal salary. Having got him, how can we secure his devotion to the school? Identify him with it; make his life's interest centre in it; make him, in his sphere, as zealous as if he were the head; make him give, not so many hours per day, measured on the clock, but himself—his best energies, his best thought, his active endeavours for the real good of every boy entrusted to his care, recorded in the characters and lives of the hundreds of grateful men who shall have passed under his care.

How can this be done? As it is done in the best schools now—namely, by assuring a man of the

security of his position so long as his work is good; by periodical increases of salary according to his efficiency and zeal: the first will make a teacher feel at home, settled, recognised, appreciated—it will bring out the best in the man; the second will secure the school his constant interest and all his teaching energy. So long as a man feels that he is grossly underpaid, and that good work cannot avail to secure him in his position, the man is working, so to speak, at low pressure. He does not respect an office which is rated so lightly. He has to eke out a livelihood by taking clerical work, by taking evening classes, by private teaching, and so on. This, of course, is bad for the school. On considering these things one can hardly be surprised at the prevalence among assistant-masters—ladies are more enthusiastic—of a peculiar apathy and want of interest with regard to their work; nor at the small proportion of graduates in secondary schools—public schools as well as private. One remedy for the latter evil has been suggested in the form of a register of teachers qualified to teach in secondary schools, so that parents may know 'who's who.' What care parents about the teachers' qualifications if the school passes among their circle as a good school? In choosing a doctor, who inquires about his diplomas? All doctors, practically, are qualified. Are they all good doctors? There is only one way to obtain good and well-qualified teachers, and that is to offer a sufficient inducement.

#### THE INSPECTION OF SCHOOLS.

What assurance have we that a school is doing its duty by our children? None whatever. True, when the child is about thirteen or fourteen he may be entered for some outside independent examination, such as the Oxford or Cambridge Locals, by way of test, if the school course corresponds thereto. But such a method is not feasible. And, moreover, discovery would come too late. The only safe plan at present is to have the pupil tested periodically, which is tantamount to saying that a thorough, complete, independent, and impartial inspection—sanitary as well as educational—ought to be compulsory on every school in the land. We are compelled by the law to send our children to school; we are therefore entitled to demand that Government shall make schools efficient, or close them. But thorough inspection means more than an annual visit; it must be kept up throughout the year. A good school will welcome inspection; a bad school cannot have too much of it. Scholarship is not the chief requisite in an inspector. What is essential is to have had considerable experience in teaching in these schools, and to be perfectly familiar with every question involved in the working of a school. Would a professor of the abstract principles of mechanics make a competent inspector of the complicated engines and machinery in our men-of-war? In our primary schools inspection is

admitted to be essential. Is human nature different in secondary schools?

#### CONCLUSION: OUR NEEDS.

To adapt our schools to our needs as an industrial and commercial nation, we want (1) the means to pay well-qualified teachers; (2) Government inspection, educational and sanitary, of every school; (3) local authorities over large areas to

(a) prevent wasteful competition, (b) settle the aims and curricula of schools with reference to the needs of the district, and (c) appoint head and visiting-teachers; (4) a strong central authority, controlling and harmonising primary, secondary, and technical education through the local authorities, and appointing inspectors; and (5) as a basis, a supply of preparatory schools for children of seven to nine.

## SECRET DESPATCHES.

### CHAPTER II.



BEFORE long I awoke to the fact that both windows of my compartment were open, and that the evening had turned unaccountably cold. My fur-lined overcoat was lying where I had placed it when I took it off; and having arranged the windows to my liking, I proceeded to put it on. While in the act of buttoning it, a slight protuberance of the breast-pocket attracted my attention. Inserting my hand into the pocket, I drew from it a long, narrow envelope, fastened in the usual way, the contents of which seemed to consist of one or more documents, and which certainly was no property of mine. I stared at it for some moments in a maze of perplexity. Why had the packet been put there? To whom did it belong? Then, perceiving that there was something written on it in pencil, with the help of my *pince-nez* I managed to decipher the following words, here translated, which had evidently been scrawled in a great hurry:

'Mr Simkinson is earnestly entreated to deliver the enclosed papers unread to'—

That was all.

And then in a flash everything became clear to me. The packet had been put where I had found it by Mdle. Dufarge during my absence from the carriage. Something had led her to suspect that she was about to be arrested, and rather than allow the papers to fall into the hands of the police, she had determined, on the spur of the moment, to entrust them to me for delivery, but had not had time to write either the name or address of the person for whom they were intended. That was indeed unfortunate. I would gladly have obliged Mdle. Dufarge—for whose arrest I was sincerely sorry—so far as it lay in my power to do so; but, in lack of the requisite information, I was altogether helpless in the affair. I turned the envelope over and over, but there was no other scrap of writing on it.

What was to be done?

In the papers themselves something would most likely be found which would furnish a clue to the missing information, but in face of the request that the envelope should be delivered in-

tact, I not unnaturally shrank from opening it. Still, I must either disregard the injunction or be saddled, willy-nilly, with a batch of documents of undoubted importance to somebody, which would never otherwise reach the person for whom they were intended. Of the two courses open to me which was the more advisable one to take?

For some minutes I sat in a brown study, debating the question this way and that. At length I ended the matter by taking my pen-knife, slitting open the envelope, and extracting the contents.

These proved to consist of three separate documents, apparently written by different persons. Although couched in what to me was to a certain extent enigmatic language, there could be little doubt, from the point of view of the powers that were, as to their treasonable tendency. But the sole point which concerned me was that in none of them could I find any trace of an address at which to deliver them; while, in place of proper names, initials only were given. It was a most embarrassing position in which to find one's self, and I wished most heartily that Mdle. Dufarge had found another messenger.

We were now approaching Abbeville, so I crammed the confounded things back into my pocket, and buttoned my coat over them.

At Abbeville my compartment was invaded by a stout, elderly, genial-looking Frenchman, who, with his tightly-buttoned frock-coat, his carefully waxed moustache, and gold-rimmed spectacles, had the appearance of a man of substance and standing.

The stranger seemed of a talkative disposition, and before many minutes were over we were in the midst of an animated conversation. I hardly know what impelled me to do so, but after a time I told him about the Amiens incident in connection with Mdle. Dufarge. I was, however, careful to make no mention of the mysterious packet of papers. My companion listened attentively, but when I had come to an end he merely shrugged his shoulders and said, 'Persons who are so foolish as to risk their liberty in an attempt to subvert the government must pay the penalty of their rashness;' and

therewith he turned the conversation into another channel.

By-and-by I offered him my card—my business one, I mean—for I never miss an opportunity of pushing the firm's sparkling bottled ales. He returned the compliment by proffering me his own pasteboard, on which, however, was merely inscribed the words, 'M. Legard, Abbeville.' He was going through to London, he gave me to understand, where he had a sister who was lying dangerously ill. At Boulogne we shook hands and parted. I had some customers to call upon both there and at Calais, and would not be able to cross before the afternoon boat next day.

It had been dark some time, and was raining fast when I reached the Charing Cross terminus by the seven thirty-five boat train the following evening. Hardly had I set foot on the platform before I felt a tap on my shoulder, and on turning found myself, immensely to my surprise, face to face with M. Legard. He proffered his hand as an old acquaintance might have done, and greeted me effusively. He had been waiting purposely for me, he went on to observe, in the hope that I should arrive by the evening train (I had mentioned incidentally the day before that Charing Cross Station was the one nearest my home), adding that he had every reason for believing he had secured for me what would prove to be a very valuable order for export bottled ales.

On hearing this I did not fail to prick up my ears, neither time nor place mattering a jot to me so long as I can do a profitable stroke of business. Only, M. Legard proceeded to remark, I must go with him at once and be introduced to his friend if I wished to secure the order, as the latter was due to leave London at six o'clock next morning, and would not be back for some time to come.

Having thanked M. Legard for the trouble he had taken on my behalf, I intimated my willingness to accompany him as soon as I had deposited my portmanteau in the cloak-room. A few minutes later the Frenchman and I were rattling through the streets in a four-wheeler.

I took little or no heed of the way we were going; indeed, so smeared were the cab windows with the heavy rain that everything seen through them looked blurred and unfamiliar; besides which, my attention was pretty well taken up by my companion's animated flow of talk, which politeness demanded that I should not altogether ignore. However, our ride did not last much longer than a quarter of an hour, at the end of which time the cab drew up with a jerk.

The Frenchman was the first to alight, and while I was following his example he ran nimbly up a short flight of steps and knocked what might be termed a double postman's knock on the door opposite which we had drawn up. Hardly had his fingers left the knocker before the door was opened from the inside, as if by some mechanical agency, no one being visible. I had followed Legard up the steps, and he now turned to me. '*Entrez, s'il vous plait, monsieur,*' he said as he stood aside to let me pass. I at once complied, and he followed close on my heels, and shut the door behind us. A moment later I heard the cab drive away. Evidently the driver had been paid his fare in advance.

Before me stretched a passage of some length, dimly lighted by a small oil-lamp on a bracket fixed against the wall. It seemed to me rather an unlikely sort of place in which to find a customer for my ales. But there was no time for thought; for Legard at once led the way along the passage, with a polite request to me to follow him. I did so without hesitation. Opening a door at the end, he ushered me into a room of considerable dimensions, lighted by a single gas-jet, the sole furniture of which was a couple of chairs and a small table. A click of the door caused me to turn quickly, only to find that I was alone. Legard had vanished without a word. Still, I felt no uneasiness. Advancing to the table, I placed my hat on it, drew off my gloves, unbuttoned my overcoat, and sat down. Then it was I first noticed that a long dark curtain was drawn completely across the lower end of the room.

## 'PENNY-IN-THE-SLOT' GAS-METERS AND THEIR USERS.

By CANNING WILLIAMS.



**T**WELVE years ago the first gas-meter designed to supply gas in exchange for coin was patented, the description of the apparatus extending over eighteen closely-printed pages, and being accompanied with twelve sheets of drawings. Since then many different patterns of 'penny-in-the-

slot' gas-meters have been placed upon the market, each claiming to have some special point in its favour.

The measuring and registering portions of prepayment gas-meters do not differ from those of ordinary meters; but, in order that the supply of gas may be shut off when the quantity prepaid has been used, the meter is provided with

apparatus which automatically closes a valve for this purpose. The closing of the valve is a process which occupies several minutes, the gradual lowering of the light warning the consumer that his illuminant is about to be cut off unless another coin is inserted in the slot. At the side of the meter is a box, under lock and key, which receives the coins. This box is periodically emptied of its contents by an official of the gasworks.

The inventor of the original 'slot' meter—Mr Brownhill, of Birmingham—lost no time in bringing his appliance under the notice of some prominent gas engineers; but the general feeling among them was that it was doomed to fail. It was ingenious but impracticable; clever but clumsy. A brighter view of the future of the meter was taken, however, by a Mr Marsh, who canvassed every gas manager in the kingdom on its behalf, and iterated and reiterated a thousand times the virtues of the mechanism. But his eloquence, energy, time, and money were thrown away. Gas managers listened to him with that air of amused interest with which people hearken to the words of enthusiasts, and that was all. But Mr Marsh was resourceful as well as enthusiastic; so, banishing the disappointment which his unavailing tour had created, he proposed to the South Metropolitan Gas Company that a hundred of the meters should be fixed under his guarantee to remove them and pay all costs and damages that might ensue from their use if they proved to be unsuccessful. To a proposal so practical and confident the directors of the company could not well demur; so the meters were fixed, and after a sufficient trial pronounced to be a success. Then the general body of meter-makers, who had previously stood aloof, and quietly enjoyed the difficulties of the parent makers, rushed into the field to annex some of the spoil, as Mr Marsh graphically puts it, and 'so-called prepayment meter inventors became as plentiful as mushrooms in season.'

As to the immense strides which the 'slot' meters have since made in popular estimation, the following words of the secretary of the company above referred to bear convincing witness: 'We began very humbly in 1892—a considerable interval seems to have elapsed between the experimental installation of the hundred meters and the practical adoption of the system—and for the first six months our receipts from the meters amounted to £172; in 1893 they were £6300; in 1894, £29,600; in 1895, £73,300; in 1896, £119,300; in 1897, £158,100; while last year the amount was £183,600—all in pennies' (*Journal of Gas Lighting*, February 14, 1899). He also stated that at the end of last year they had no less than 80,000 'slot' meters in use in their district of supply. The London Gaslight and Coke Company, whose district is much larger than that of the

South Metropolitan Company, has an even greater number of the meters in operation; and, what to the gas companies is the most satisfactory feature of the business, the great bulk of their prepayment consumers are additional users of gas. At a moderate computation, pennies to the value of £400,000—96,000,000 coins, weighing over 800 tons—were removed from the London 'slot' gas-meters during the year 1898. Taking the whole of the United Kingdom, the figures would probably double those given for London—truly a most marvellous result of a small beginning.

It is not surprising that this wholesale use of copper coinage should have necessitated a great increase in the quantity minted. The Chancellor of the Exchequer referred to this in his Budget speech in 1897, when he said that more than three times as many copper coins were struck during the year 1896-7 as in 1895-6, a large proportion of the additional pennies being no doubt required for prepayment gas-meters.

It is the practice of most of the gas companies and local authorities who supply 'slot' gas-meters to also lay the house pipes and provide and fix the gasfittings and a gas cooking-stove, a satisfactory return on the outlay being obtained from the extra rate for gas charged to the consumers under the prepayment plan. This arrangement, having removed all the old obstacles to the use of gas among those whose means do not permit of the purchase of gas apparatus or the payment of a quarterly gas bill, largely accounts for the great success which has attended the system.

It is interesting in this connection to hear that the bakers in the East End of London have experienced a falling off in their business owing to the great number of gas-stoves which are now used in conjunction with the 'slot' meters in the artisans' dwellings in that district. Cooking by gas is so simple and expeditious, the gas companies would probably say, that it is now no longer necessary to seek the assistance of the professional baker.

One very material good which has resulted from the extended use of prepayment gas-meters is the diminution of fatalities, fires, and minor accidents, caused by paraffin-oil lamps. A few years ago it was stated in a report of the Metropolitan Fire Brigade that the number of notified fires in the Metropolis due to lamp accidents was something like four hundred and fifty a year, the number of lives lost being thirty-three. A vast number of accidents from this cause must, however, have occurred which did not find insertion in the registers of the Fire Brigade.

On the other hand, the meters have been the unfortunate means of increasing the number of petty thefts—robberies from them being of almost daily occurrence in London and the larger towns. The *Daily Telegraph* referred to this in September 1898, in the following words: 'It would seem that the "penny-in-the-slot" gas-meter, rapidly as

it has made headway among a certain class of consumers, and satisfactory as it has no doubt proved to the gas companies, has much to answer for as an encourager of crime.' The prosecuting solicitor in the case which called forth the above comment stated that hundreds of robberies had been committed since the meters had been introduced into London; in many cases the consumers themselves had been tempted in hard-up times to break open the coin-boxes, but oftener the robberies were the work of practised thieves, who, aware that the meters were frequently placed in the coal-cellar or pantry in the front area, went in the night and forcibly despoiled them of the coinage they contained. At another time two boys were charged with stealing money from the meters. The bench ordered them each to receive six strokes with the birch-rod, whereupon the aunt of one of the boys requested the magistrates to 'lay it on thick,' and this, adds the report, 'was done in the course of the afternoon.' In a similar case tried at Manchester it was stated that about ten out of their 26,000 'slot' meters were robbed every week. The moral which should be drawn from these thefts is that the meters should be fixed in positions of greater safety, and be provided with superior padlocks, many of the locks used being of the commonest description.

During the past few years the 'prepayment system' has been to the fore at meetings of British and Irish gas managers. Several papers have been read on the question, and much discussion has followed them. The papers are interesting, and the discussions even more so, the reports of both enlivening the usually almost painful seriousness of the pages of the technical press which is devoted to the gas industry. At a meeting of Irish gas managers a member said that he had had a good deal of trouble with his prepayment consumers as to how long the pennyworth of gas should last; one saying that he obtained six hours' light for a penny, another six and a half, and so on. He was also told by some of them that unless they were supplied with meters similar to So-and-so's, which gave light for two hours longer than theirs, they would discontinue the use of gas. On investigating the matter, he found that these alleged grievances had their origin in false reports

circulated by a few of the consumers in order to annoy those who were inclined to be discontented. The same gentleman remarked that the consumers were often surprised at the number of pennies which were found in the boxes, and one can easily imagine the envious eyes which many a poor Irishwoman would cast upon the coins which the collector removed. Another manager informed his colleagues that he adopted the system of having a separate bag for each 'slot' consumer, into which the collector put the money straight from the box, afterwards counting it at the office, naively adding that 'he thought this a very good plan, because the consumers might think they were using too much gas if they saw how much money there was.'

The same meeting was told by one of the speakers that he had supplied a shoemaker with a 'slot' meter, and that the wily old man obtained pennies by saying to his customers, 'Just put a penny in this slot, and you will see a bird come up and sing.' But this was a very mild form of deception compared with the trick of a Lancashire man. This individual bored a neat hole in a penny, inserted in it a piece of string, and dropped the coin into the slot. He then endeavoured to draw it out again for future use; but, much to his discomfiture, he could neither obtain his penny nor the gas, which made things a little awkward for him, especially when the collector sternly demanded an explanation of the affair a few days later. Many other instances might be given of misapplied ingenuity (not to use a more serious word) practised with the object of persuading the meter to give a pennyworth of gas in exchange for a piece of tin or iron, a beaten-out soda-water capsule, or a metal 'check.' These things might be placed in automatic machines at railway stations and in the streets without much fear of detection; but when they are dropped into the slot of a prepayment gas-meter, a day is bound to come when these 'tricks that are vain' will be laid bare. An equally interesting, but far more creditable, fact in connection with the meters is that they are not infrequently used by the consumers as savings-banks—florins being inserted in them instead of pennies, and the balances either claimed or put back in the boxes when the collector calls.

## FEUILLETONS.



At the corner of some of the more populous and busy thoroughfares of Paris you will sometimes see a man surrounded by a little knot of bonnetless girls and women, to whom he is distributing broad-sheets from a large bundle he holds in his arms. If you hold out your hand he will give you one. One side of the sheet is gaudily illustrated in red

and black. The picture represents, in nine cases out of ten, a distracted-looking damsel, into whose breast the dark-browed villain of melodrama is discharging the contents of a six-chambered revolver; while on the ground the dead body of a murdered infant lies weltering in its gore. Turn the sheet and you will find the first chapters of the latest thing in blood-and-thunder romances which the editor of the *Petit*, or it may

be the *Grand Menteur*, is publishing in daily instalments. The distribution of the brightly-coloured sheet is the time-honoured method for reminding the porters, cooks, and workgirls of the capital that the section of the press that specially caters for them is as solicitous as ever of supplying them with the sort of mental pabulum for which their souls are supposed to yearn.

Of the making of the interminable romances that slowly unfold themselves at the foot of the halfpenny journals of France numberless stories are told. The vast majority of the readers of these papers know little and care less for the great questions that may be convulsing the civilised world at the moment. Provided the *feuilletons* be sufficiently stuffed with exciting episodes, they are prepared to swallow, with closed eyes, whatever enormities are printed in the other part of the paper.

For Millaud, the founder of the famous *Petit Journal* of Paris—a 'largest circulation in the world'—the *feuilleton* was everything. When he got hold of something that struck him as suitable his joy was boundless. No 'sacrifice' in the way of bold advertisement dismayed him. When it was a rival paper that got hold of a good thing Millaud fell into the lowest depths of despair. One day he learned that a competitor for the favour of the public was about to commence a *feuilleton* having the sensational title of 'The Man with Four Wives.' 'By the shades of Paris!' he shouted 'we must be equal with them.' Without losing an instant he despatched messengers all over the town with injunctions to bring into his presence, drunk or sober, a certain writer whose literary talent he held in great esteem.

'Look here,' said Millaud, 'I must have something as good as that. Sit down there and write me out the first chapters now.'

'Impossible, my dear sir! At the present moment I have not an idea in my head.'

'What, sir! You dare to call yourself an author and are not ashamed to admit you have no ideas. I will teach you, sir. Sit down; we will do the thing together.'

What went on exactly behind the closed door is uncertain; but at the end of three hours the first two chapters of a story that warmed the cockles of Millaud's heart were ready for the printers. The publication, it was decided, should be delayed for a day or two, in order that the curiosity of the readers might be properly whetted. On the following morning, at the head of the first column of the paper, this notice was printed in large type:

DEAR READER!

Invent, imagine, suppose;

Ransack your brain, leave no corner unsearched;  
Seek some fatality that will blind you with horror—  
Something undreamed of, mad, too horrible for words;  
Concoct some dreadful poison; discover some abyss  
Blacker than Crime, deeper than Folly:  
Never, never will you come near my subject.

The foregoing, which is a very slightly parodied version of the celebrated tirade in *Ruy Blas*, was followed by the words, 'which, tomorrow, the *Petit Journal* will commence to treat of, under the title of "Death by Laughing." The success of the story was tremendous, and fully maintained the reputation of the paper.

Though the halfpenny journal *feuilletoniste* may not practise literature in its highest form, it is not the first-comer who can hope to excel in the art. Men who have once caught the ear of their special public can command very large sums of money for their work, and find in their material prosperity consolation for the knowledge that their names will not go down to posterity. Their traducers maintain that the whole secret consists in terminating each instalment in such a manner that the reader must wait with impatience for the continuation. Ernest Blum, the author of so many rollicking farces, publishes the full recipe in his diary: 'You may serve up whatever absurdity comes into your head, provided you terminate each instalment something in this fashion: "The assassin entered the room; the Countess shrieked. . . . (To be continued);" or this: "Suddenly, in the doorway, a man's figure was outlined. Who was that man? (To be continued.)"' Blum also gives an example of an ending that missed fire: 'The elephant seized Robert round the waist, and raised him high in the air! (To be continued.)' After reading this he waited, he says, with considerable anxiety for the morrow, as he had become deeply interested in Robert's welfare. When the next issue of the paper arrived, however, he read: 'We will now leave Robert for some time in the grasp of the elephant; the reader is already quite sufficiently acquainted with our hero's energetic character to divine that, somehow or other, he will not let the elephant have the last word in the dispute.' A good many readers, it is to be feared, like the diarist, then and there renounced all further interest in the energetic Robert.

A reproach commonly levelled at the head of many of the most renowned *feuilletonistes* of the day is that they frequently put their names to stories that somebody else has written. One of the past-masters in the art of concocting solutions of horror double distilled recently had an order to surpass himself for one of the leading Paris papers. The honorarium was a handsome one—something like two thousand five hundred pounds, it is said. On the day announced the first instalment, treating naturally of rapine, murder, and sudden death, duly appeared. Every twenty-four hours thereafter a fresh supply of horror was as sure to be forthcoming as the sun was of rising. The world of Paris domesticity spoke of nothing else. Assured of the success of the story, the author hied him off to sunnier climes to pass the winter, after first having taken the precaution of seeing

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that the printers had 'plenty to go on with.' To tell the truth, not a line of the story had been penned by himself. The inventive faculties of even the most celebrated of celebrated authors are apt to feel the strain after a lifetime spent in imagining murders and robberies. The author in question was in this case a talented professor, an acquaintance of the *feuilletoniste*, who had arranged to do the story for him at the rate of fifty centimes a line, a fraction of what he himself was to pocket. His *dolce far niente* on the Riviera was rudely disturbed one day by the receipt of a telegram from the paper: 'Only enough copy for another fortnight! Send on continuation and conclusion.' It was the work of a few seconds to run to the telegraph office and send a message to the professor, urging him to put his shoulder to the wheel. No answer came; but two days later brought another telegram from the paper couched in more energetic terms. The author jumped into the first train for Paris, only to find when he reached the capital that his substitute had been inconsiderate enough to die. At the sight of her visitor's despair the widow almost forgot her own grief!

'Promise to pay me the fifty centimes a line as long as the story goes on,' she said, 'and I will tell you where the end of it is.'

'It's a promise.'

'My poor husband had no time to write himself, so he arranged with an usher he knew to do it for him at the rate of a halfpenny a line.'

'The address of that usher—quick!'

Half-an-hour later the author was knocking at the door of a cramming establishment in a distant suburb.

'M. Chatol lives here?'

'Yes, sir. At least he did until this morning, when he left to do his annual military service, and he has not left his address.'

'Take my card to the head-master, and say I would like to see him on a very urgent matter.'

The head-master was profuse in his regrets at his assistant's sudden departure. 'Best man I ever had, sir. Hardly knew how to read himself, and yet kept the boys working from morning to night.'

'Don't you think if you were to look over any

papers he may have left behind him you might be able to find his address?'

'Not the least chance, I fear. All the time he was here I never saw him once with a pen in his hand.'

The celebrated author rushed from the house feeling he was on the brink of madness. What was he to do now? Stop the publication and so lose the money of which he stood rather in need at the moment? Ask a *confrère* to help him, and thus admit his duplicity? Cut the story short by killing the hero in the next chapter? Alas! alas! With the exception of the hero's name he knew nothing whatever about him. It was a point of honour with him never to read his own works! There appeared to be only two practical alternatives: commit suicide or terminate the story himself. He chose the latter, and gloomily waded through three months of gore. When he had concluded his brain was in a whirl. Names of places and persons, murders and suicides, the dead and the living, were inextricably mingled in what was left of his mind. He made a great effort, however, and sat down to work. After he had composed a few hundred lines, he considered his revolver very attentively, and tried to recall Hamlet's soliloquy. He had not got very far, when a telegram was brought to him. Languidly he opened it. What good could possibly happen to him now? Suddenly he rubbed his glasses furiously to make sure they were not playing him false. 'Received continuation and conclusion. Splendid. Congratulations and thanks.' He gave up trying to think what it all meant. He was saved and was happy. For the present that was sufficient.

A month later, when the usher returned, the mystery was unravelled. 'Perfectly simple, my dear sir. I made my pupils do the work. Splendid mental exercise for them, I assure you. The morning I left, the thing was just finished, so I took the manuscript with me and handed it in at the newspaper office on my way to the railway station.'

The accuracy of this story in its main details is vouched for by a well-known French literary man.

*Se non è vero.*

## CUCKOO MIMICRY.



IN the Oölogical Department of the Natural History Museum at South Kensington a collection has been formed of some sixty clutches of eggs each of which contains the egg of a cuckoo. These clutches represent about thirty species of birds, and show the extraordinary variety in the colouring of a cuckoo's egg from perfect 'mimicry' to striking

contrast. The hedge-sparrow—the most frequent foster-parent of the cuckoo—lays a turquoise-blue egg, whilst the ordinary colour of the cuckoo's egg is a dull speckled-brown, very like that of a skylark. In the Natural History Museum collection there are six clutches of eggs of the hedge-sparrow, each containing a cuckoo's egg. The localities from which they come are as follows: (1) Brighton, (2) Hayward's Heath,

(3) South-west Lancashire, (4) North-west Cheshire, (5) and (6) Hampshire. In the case of No. 1 (Brighton) the cuckoo's egg is the counterpart of the hedge-sparrow's in texture and colour, though almost twice as large—a wonderful instance of mimicry. In all the other cases (Nos. 2-6) the cuckoo's egg is the ordinary dull speckled-brown—a striking contrast. In the case of two other species—the pied flycatcher (Silesia) and the redstart (Vaalkerstard), both of which lay blue eggs—the cuckoo imitates their colour, but the egg is much larger; in the nest, however, of a Danish redstart the cuckoo laid an egg of a pale mottled-drab. In the following instances the imitative colouring is very perfect, the eggs being generally double the size of those of the foster-parent: Lesser whitethroat, mottled greenish-gray (Halle, Saxony); Orphean warbler, white, pale greenish-blue, spotted (Malaga); garden warbler, buff-speckled (Brandenburg); blue-headed yellow wagtail, gray-speckled (Frankfort-on-Oder); barred warbler, pale mottled-green (Alsace); meadow-pipit, reddish-brown (North-west Cheshire); white wagtail, gray-speckled (Germany); linnets, white, greenish spots (Germany). In the case of the red-backed shrike or butcher-bird (Marne), the resemblance between the two eggs in size and in colouring—cream body-colour with reddish cloud at the upper end—is so remarkable that in this instance one might be pardoned for imagining that there had been some mistake.

In the following instances the cuckoo seems to have made no apparent effort to effect mimicry, but to have been contented to lay its normal brown-speckled egg: wren, white, with pinkish-brown spots (Pomerania); garden warbler white, buff blotches (Warwickshire); reed warbler, white, greenish spots (Middlesex); yellow-hammer, gray, dark pencilled marks (Surrey); curl bunting, gray, dark markings and blotches (Surrey). After an examination of the above-mentioned specimens it is somewhat difficult to arrive at any conclusion as to the instinct or method of the cuckoo with regard to mimicry. Why does a Brighton cuckoo lay a blue egg, and a Hayward's Heath cuckoo (almost a neighbour) lay a brown egg, in a hedge-sparrow's nest? Is one cuckoo gifted with more brain power (and likewise a more varied assortment of colouring matter) than another cuckoo, or are the large eggs merely double yolks of the nesting-bird, as we sometimes find in the case of the ordinary farm-yard hen. Professor Newton, when writing on this subject in his *Dictionary of Birds* (1893), says at page 121: 'But a much more curious assertion has been also made, and one that at first sight appears so incomprehensible as to cause little surprise at the neglect it long encountered. *Ælian*, who flourished in the second century, declared (*De Nat. Anim.* III. xxx.) that the cuckoo laid eggs in the nests of those birds only that produced eggs like her own—a statement which is, of course, too general; but in

1767 currency was given to it by *Salerne* (*L'Hist. Nat. Ois.*, p. 42), who was hardly a believer in it; and it is to the effect, as he was told by an inhabitant of Sologne, that the egg of a cuckoo resembles in colour that of the eggs normally laid by the kind of bird in whose nest it is placed. In 1853 the same notion was prominently and independently brought forward by Dr Beldanus (*Nau- mania*, 1853, pp. 307-25), and in time became known to British ornithologists, most of whom were sceptical of its truth, as well they might be, since no likeness whatever is ordinarily apparent in the very familiar case of the blue-green egg of the hedge-sparrow and that of the cuckoo, which is so often found beside it.' Dr Beldanus based his notion on a series of cuckoos' eggs in his own cabinet, a selection from which he afterwards figured in illustration of his paper. This collection was seen by Professor Newton, who, after dismissing the supposition that the eggs were wrongly ascribed to the cuckoo, came to the conclusion that the mimicry must be accounted for by the law of natural selection and a hereditary tendency of the cuckoo to place its egg in the nest of a particular species.

The learned professor in the course of his interesting article states that one Herr Branne, a forester at Greitz in Reuss, shot a hen cuckoo just as she was leaving the nest of an Icterine warbler. In the oviduct of the cuckoo he found an egg coloured very like that of the warbler; and on looking into the nest he found an exactly similar egg, which there could be no reasonable doubt had just been laid by that very cuckoo. This instance, assuming its authenticity, would certainly go far to prove that, by some law or instinct of which we have little, if any, knowledge, the cuckoo is able to produce an egg resembling in colour and texture that of the bird in whose nest it is to be placed for hatching.

#### 'THE OLD ORDER CHANGETH.'

No Knight rides forth upon a summer morn  
To seek adventure for a day and year,  
No drawbridge falls at summons of his horn,  
No wrathful foe doth prove his sword and spear,  
Nor battle giveth he for maid forlorn;  
No senechal doth bid a courteous cheer.

Though the old armour rusteth on the wall,  
And the good sword hath now no power to bite,  
No mailed heel ring through the quiet hall,  
No charger paw the ground at morning's light,  
Yet may he still do work not mean or small—  
Still may he be a 'perfect, gentle Knight.'

Still lives the high ideal; still the strong  
May help the weak, may succour the distressed,  
Lighten the burden that the age's wrong  
Lays on the wretched; still may he invest  
His soul with knighthood, though no minstrel song  
Greet his emprise or glory in his quest.

C. J. GRIFFIN.